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BILINGUAL BY CHOICE: LATINO PARENTS' RATIONALES AND STRATEGIES FOR RAISING CHILDREN WITH TWO LANGUAGES

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Abstract

This paper reports findings of a study which addressed caretakers' rationales and actions in support of Spanish language maintenance and the issues they confronted in pursuing this goal. Analysis focuses on both respondents' attitudes regarding individual bilingualism as an idealized social construct and the reasons behind their personal decisions with regard to home language use. On a societal level, respondents favored an arrangement defined by cultural pluralism and viewed individual bilingualism as a means to promote this goal. The rationale given most frequently by caretakers when asked specifically about their personal motivations for using Spanish with their children concerned instrumental benefits from being bilingual: knowing Spanish would serve their children well academically, give them an advantage in a competitive job market, and help them to adapt in the face of possible geographic relocation. However, analysis of the interviews as life stories revealed that when not explicitly asked about rationales for their personal decisions on behalf of Spanish, caretakers tended to emphasize their commitment to the minority language as an act of affirmation of group identity. Such analysis also revealed that support for a strategy of maintenance required constant reaffirmation as families struggled with changes in their life circumstances.

Introduction

According to the 1993 U.S. Census Report, one in seven residents of the United States speaks a language other than English at home. Moreover, an increasing number of children are learning one language at home and proceeding through pre-school and grade school programs that require them to adopt a different language. Much of the debate about the education of language minority children has concerned the choice between English as a Second Language programs, which often seek to move children into all-English classes at the earliest opportunity, and bilingual programs, whether transitional or maintenance (August & Garcia, 1988; Malakoff & Hakuta, 1990). In communities with a sufficient number of students who share a home language, and where state or local policy favors bilingual programs, debate about the type of program that will offer the greatest benefits for children's linguistic and cognitive development has centered on questions dealing with instructional sequencing and structure. Thus, researchers, educational policymakers, and practitioners have debated what proportion of instruction should be in English and what in the home language, whether the two languages should be kept entirely separate or whether code alternation should be permitted and encouraged, and at what age children should be transitioned to all English classrooms (see, for example, Arias & Casanova, 1993; Hakuta, 1986; Padilla, Fairchild, & Valadez, 1990; Stanford Working Group, 1993).

While such curricular concerns are certainly deserving of attention, the overwhelming concentration of attention on the formal education of language minority students invites the inference that school is the most important arena for language practice where bilingualism can flourish. Such an inference would indeed be unfortunate in reference to a context such as the United States, where loss of the mother tongue has long been viewed by many educators and policymakers as a positive step toward Americanization (Hakuta, 1986; Secada & Lightfoot, 1993). In such a context, overwhelmingly, research in the sociology of language as well as in the linguistic aspects of bilingual development indicates that dual language maintenance cannot be achieved without a strong commitment on the part of the home. Fishman (1991), for example, in a recent volume on reversing language shift, argued that the role of the school in

maintaining a child's first language is often overestimated. Based on an examination of a wide range of endangered languages, he showed that school-based programs alone are insufficient to prevent first language attrition. Rather, Fishman argued that language practice in the home is the most critical factor in predicting whether a language will be maintained across generations.

Research that examines language proficiencies provides further evidence for the argument that home language use is of primary importance in language maintenance. For example, Hakuta and d'Andrea (1992), in a study of a rural central California Mexican- American community, showed that high school students maintained high levels of Spanish proficiency as long as extensive use of Spanish characterized home interactions. Crucially, Spanish proficiency was not compromised by acquisition of high levels of English proficiency. Similar results were reported in studies of fourth- to sixth-grade children in Eastside (a pseudonym), California, a Mexican immigrant community in the San Francisco Bay Area (Hakuta & Pease-Alvarez, 1994). Among the Eastside children, Spanish proficiency as measured by productive vocabulary, discourse cohesiveness, and translation ability was maintained as long as approximately equal amounts of Spanish and English were spoken at home. Spanish proficiency dropped precipitously among children from homes where English had become the main language of daily interactions. Finally, ethnographic studies of Hispanic communities have shown that the extensive use of Spanish in daily interactions and in literacy events in the home is necessary to foster complementary development in both Spanish and English (Delgado-Gaitan, 1990; Vasquez, Pease-Alvarez, & Shannon, 1994).

Methods

The analysis in this article emerged from an exploratory study which focused on parental perspectives on the relationship between language use in the home and their children's bilingual and biliterate development. Based on interviews with San Francisco Bay Area Hispanic families in which parents have chosen to maintain the use of Spanish in the home, the study explored parental views and decisions on a variety of topics related to language transmission and socialization:

parental rationales for their decision to raise their children with two languages; strategies for maintaining Spanish at home; language use in the home; day-to-day issues encountered in the effort to sustain the use of the minority language; the personal impact of language policy as experienced by different family members over time; support and support systems that served to help sustain the use of the minority language; and the societal argument - if one existed - that caretakers offered in support of their decision concerning language choice in child rearing.

Data and Elicitation Procedures

Because the aim of the pilot study was to uncover a range of perspectives that underlay bilingual parents' decisions regarding language use in child rearing, caretakers were selected to represent a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds and family circumstances as well as several different Spanish-speaking countries of origin. In-depth interviewing (rather than, for example, the multiple-choice questionnaires frequently used in survey research) was selected as the main elicitation strategy because the researchers were of the view that parental perspectives had not been fully represented in the reports of findings of survey-type inquiry, which is of two types. The first consists of protocols designed by sociologists of language to yield measures which, in various combinations, can be used to characterize distinct speech communities. (The reports of Allard & Landry, 1992 and Landry & Al lard, 1992 on the ethnolinguistic vitality of two Franco-Canadian communities in the provinces of New Brunswick and Ontario respectively comprise excellent examples of this use of survey research.) This protocol type, however, is not designed to uncover the interviewees' individual perspectives; its utility is in facilitating correlation of responses on a variety of topics with patterns of language maintenance and loss. The second type of survey research comprises overviews or syntheses of studies conducted by other researchers (e.g., Fishman, 1991). Although this type of report provides a useful heuristic for the conceptual framework that underlies the present study, it is difficult to interpret the reported findings independently without access to the specific contexts and questions that elicited the primary data. In particular, it is unclear whether such summaries evolved from bilingual family members' perspectives or from a sample of responses gleaned

from a broader stratum. Similarly, it is not always possible to determine whether the rationales provided by respondents were intended to explicate personal choices and decisions with regard to the use of two languages, or account for their support for bilingualism as a societal goal.

The interviews, conducted during 1992 and 1993 by Schecter and Sharken-Taboada, were of the standardized, scheduled variety; that is, all respondents received the same questions in the same order (Briggs, 1986). Initial interviews varied in length, with most lasting between one and one and a half hours. Sharken-Taboada returned at a later date to speak with some of the families to obtain additional information or to clarify points that had been left ambiguous, so that the researchers could feel confident about their interpretations.

Respondents

Ten families were in the study. Respondents comprised Latino parents whose families met the following criteria:

1) There was at least one child two years or older present in the home.

2) There was at least one parent who was bilingual in both Spanish and English (i.e., home language use was truly a matter of choice).

3) Spanish was used in the home for at least some functions by one or both parents.

A decision was made not to exclude single-parent families and families with a non-parent as primary caretaker from the sample, since families thus constituted represent a significant proportion of the general population. (Such families are often excluded from study because this factor is viewed by researchers as a confounding variable.) In the cases of two-parent families, a decision was made to invite, but not require, both caretakers to participate in the interviews. Respondents' social and demographic characteristics are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1
Social and Demographic Characteristics of participating Families

Cases	Mother/Father: Birthplace, Age	Parent: Occupation	Children: Gender, Age	Children: Birthplace,Age of arrival in US
1	M: Colombia, 40 (single parent) F: Colombia, not available	M: Office worker	Ch. 1: m, 11 Ch. 2: f, 13	US US
2	M: Los Ang., 33 F: Ecuador, 36	M: Student F: Accountant	Ch. 1: m, 11 Ch. 2: m, 9 Ch. 3: m, 7	Ecuador, 5 yrs. Ecuador, 3 yrs. US
3	M: San Fran., 31 F: Peru, 37	M: Student F: Programmer	Ch. 1: m, 18 mo.	US
4	M: Oakland, 29 (single parent) F: Mexico, not available	M: Teacher	Ch. : m, 13	US
5	M: Los Ang. 27 F: Mexico, 27	M: Secretary F: Mechanic	Ch. 1: f, 5 Ch. 2: f, 15 mo. Ch. 3: m, 6 mo.	US US US
6	M: Los Ang. 51 F: Panama, 51+	M:Homemaker F: Professor	Ch. 1: m, 15 Ch. 2, f, 13	US US
7	M: N.Y., 37 F: Panama, 51+	M: Professor F: Teacher	Ch. 1: f, 10 Ch. 2: m, 19 mo	US US
8	M: Miami, 32 F: US, raised in Peru and US,37	M: Gov't. Analyst F: Admstr.	Ch. 1: f, 13 (F's child, lives with English-spking mother) Ch. 2: f, 2	US US
9	M: Florida, 41 F: Mexico, 48	M: Teacher F: Teacher	Ch. 1: f, 17 Ch. 2: m, 14 Ch. 3: m, 4.5	US Mexico, 12 yrs Mexico, 2 yrs
10	M: Mexico, 38 F: Tucson, 39	M: Admnstr. F: Student	Ch. 1: f, 9 (mother's child, father Mexican) Ch. 2: m, 3.5	US US

Data Preparation and Analysis

To prepare the data, audio recordings of interviews with participants were transcribed in full. In the initial phase of analysis, standard procedures for analyzing qualitative data were employed (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Miles & Huberman, 1984; Spindler & Spindler, 1987). In the second phase, the interviews were analyzed using techniques developed specifically for the study of narrative texts (Linde, 1993; McCabe & Peterson, 1991). All data relating to the same family were grouped to yield case studies of different families' experiences with elective bilingualism. Behaviors and responses of individual family members were compared, and a second comparison was made across families.

Findings

Phase 1 Analysis: Responses to Elicitation Protocols

The remainder of this article is devoted to the discussion of findings about respondents' rationales for Spanish language maintenance and the issues that they confronted in pursuit of this goal. With regard to attitudinal issues, we were interested in respondents' perspectives on individual bilingualism as an idealized societal construct. We were additionally interested in the reasons that motivated their personal decisions and strategies for Spanish maintenance. Thus, protocols were constructed so that we could evaluate respondents' attitudes on both these issues. In both instances, we were careful to clarify that we were not requiring respondents to restrict themselves to one rationale or argument and we encouraged them to feel free to provide as many or as few explanations as they felt accurately represented their positions.

Arguments in support of individual bilingualism as a societal practice

We settled on the following protocol for eliciting respondents' rationales in favor of individual bilingualism as an idealized construct, that is, as a societal goal:

To someone who would claim that what you're doing with your child is a bunch of nonsense/poppycock/loco, and that you're just confusing him/her and harming our society, what would you say?

We aligned responses to this question to the categories illustrated in the typology in Table 2.

Table 2
Societal Rationales for Raising Children Bilingually

Rationale	Example
1. Cultural pluralism for character development	"It develops a sense of; if anything, of geography...this more global view of different people, different, um development cultures." "I think the more [languages] the better because it opens up, it opens up the world, I think, not only in terms of traveling, but in terms of, you know, getting a better understanding of different cultures, and really getting to the matter of things.
2. Cultural pluralism as a means to a diverse society	"It seems to me that one way to ensure a healthy society is through diversity. I don't see that as a threat, I see that as an society addition to the richness of a society. And I think that one way you can make a society stagnate is by submerging those kinds of differences and not allowing people to be who they are. "If we can understand that language is not a barrier, that it is a vehicle between communities. It is a vehicle between cultures."
3. Multi-lingualism as a presumed goal	"I think in the long run it will turn out to probably be of benefit. [Society will] be more and more multilingual in the sense, because of her ability [to speak both languages]."
4. Political: Minority rights	"To have this ignorance that [there is] only this core culture of the United States, which I think is false. What is this core culture of the United States? Is it what we learn through the media? Is it what we learn through the government? Who's to say what is the core culture in the United States?" "English is a language primarily by the dominant, uh, you know, economic sector of this society. But it cannot be so perpetually ingrained on people that, you know, will- that culturally don't understand it. So you can't impose it. And you have to give the opportunity to minorities or ethnic groups. You cannot impose a language. You cannot impose, I mean, it's just a part of the aggression."
5. Political: Social restructuring	"We need to Latinize, if not the whole country, the whole state. It's a political agenda. In fifty years we're gonna be the absolute majority."

Overwhelmingly, respondents said that they favored a society defined by cultural pluralism, a goal they believed would be optimally promoted by societal support for a plurality of languages. Rationales were evenly divided between those who regarded cultural pluralism as beneficial for character development and those who viewed it as a means to promote understanding and tolerance between social groups. Two respondents articulated support for societal multilingualism as though the benefits of such a condition were self-evident. Several respondents considered individual bilingualism as part of or a means to achieving, a political agenda which they were active in pursuing. Some represented minority language maintenance as a civil right; one respondent took a more aggressive stance, favoring a reversal in hegemonic relations with Latinos in the dominant position.

Interestingly, several respondents took seriously what they interpreted as an invitation to engage in a role play, disputing the hypothetical challenger's right to raise objections to what the participants viewed essentially as a parental prerogative in the matter of child rearing. One said, "I raise my kids the way I want, you know, to raise them. And you know when they get older they can make their own decision whether they wanna speak Spanish or not but right now it's my decision and I want them to learn Spanish and that's what I want my kids to learn." A second stated emphatically, "What I do with [my son], that's my opinion."

Personal rationales for the use of two languages in family life

The protocol for eliciting respondents' personal reasons for their decisions regarding language use in the home was as follows:

We'd like to begin by reconstructing your rationale for the decision to raise your children in a bilingual home.

a) Is there anything in your own family history/ies that might have influenced your decision? [Probe: What languages were used in your homes when you were growing up?]

b) Could you reconstruct some of the discussions that you had with your spouse and/or children around language use at home? [Probe: What benefits do you foresee for your children if they are raised to be bilingual?

With regard to personal motivation for raising children bilingually, we would like to highlight the fact that respondents overwhelmingly provided detailed rationales most - outlined a series of reasons - for their actions on behalf of Spanish; only one couple represented the language practices used in their home as the outcome or consequence of unexamined behavior. Responses provided by respondents when asked specifically about their reasons for using Spanish with their children aligned to the following categories: instrumental; maintenance of group identity; consolidate relationships; personal enrichment; pragmatic; and, aesthetic. Examples of each rationale category are provided in Table 3.

Table 3
Personal Rationales for Raising Children Bilingually

Rationale and # of times offered	Example
I. Instrumental (10): A: Advantage for the job market B: Advantage for education C: Survival	"If he has two languages he might be able to get a better job." "At that time I was more aware of [the] educational system second language requirements, and I thought, well, this is great. You don't even have to ever go to a class of any foreign language." "The other thing about it was that when Lisa was born we weren't entirely sure how long we were going to stay here, so we also wanted her to be able to cope in a Spanish, a Latin American, a predominantly Spanish environment."
2. Group identity (5)	"That brings up another point, I mean, his roots, right? His daddy grew up in Peru. And so that'll get passed down. In the language itself." "I think they identify' more [with Mexico].... And they left a lot of friends behind."
3. Pragmatic (5)	"English comes naturally to me. Spanish comes naturally to Rogeho." "Why not take advantage of it, when the brain is ready for it, when, you know, your child is all set to learn language?"
4. Personal enrichment (4)	"A whole other world, he'll really kind of be given at least a key to... When you speak another language. And it's another world. And I think, `What a lucky guy'." "I wanted my children to have this gift of Spanish, uh, we discussed it, and I think, Mauricio, you know, he wants to give his children the full benefit of their intelligence."

5. Aesthetic (3)	"And also - I mean, I think there are sort of; deep structures of part of me that are tied to language, and there's some pieces of the way people are in Spanish-speaking countries that I like very much." "Be able to understand certain expressions that mean certain things that you cannot translate completely accurately."
6. Strengthen ties with family and friends (2)	"We didn't want to lose a little bit of bow he felt ...he'd left his ties with cousins or his family out there." "To go back to her father [in Mexico], to my mother [in Mexico], you know, if Isabel didn't speak Spanish, [she could] never talk to my mom, never talk to my sisters...."
7. Family/peer group pressure (1)	"So I didn't want my kids to not understand it or, you know, go visit relatives, and then they'll be, you know, silent, or don't understand and they see people that no longer speak the language, and they kind of feel there is some criticism if you don't teach your kids Spanish they'll think you don't think it's important anymore. And they also think of you as ignorant if your kids don't speak Spanish, and, you know, 'Don't you teach your children Spanish?'"

The rationale given most frequently concerned the perceived instrumental benefits of speaking more than one language. Parents argued that in the face of an uncertain future, knowledge of Spanish would: 1) serve their children well academically by providing them a head start in fulfilling language requirements; 2) help their children adapt to possible geographic dislocations and relocations; and 3) give their children an edge in a competitive job market. Parents also perceived knowledge of Spanish as an important part of their children's sense of Latino identity. Some parents also viewed the issue in pragmatic terms. In some instances, parents simply used the language in which they felt most comfortable. Others reasoned that their children would acquire Spanish more easily when they were young. Personal enrichment was mentioned by four parents as a reason for raising children bilingually. They felt that their children's lives would be more rewarding intellectually as a result of their ability to participate fully in two cultures. Other rationales included an aesthetic appreciation of the expressive possibilities of the Spanish language and the desire for children to maintain and strengthen ties with non-English-speaking relatives and friends. Finally, one person reported a negative rationale in the form of pressure from friends and relatives to transmit Spanish.

Phase 2 Analysis: The Interview as Narrative

We considered insufficient an interpretation based solely on participants' responses to individual elicitation protocols because analyses of attitudinal factors based on self-report data are especially vulnerable to criticism. Respondents' recollections and opinions are

colored by their need to make favorable impressions on the people who are questioning them, and self-report data are constrained also by the social, cultural, and political influences of the time the study is being carried out. The narrative accounting, however, encouraged by phrases such as "reconstruct your decisions" and "family history," used early on in the interview, permitted multiple checks on reported attitudes and practices. All respondents volunteered chronologies of their own and their children's odysseys with minority language maintenance. These accounts, although differing in specific content, described trajectories that shared important episodic features: daunting obstructions and miraculous overcomings; wrong-headed or cynical advisors and kind enablers; temptations to abandon the course; reckonings with conscience.

Parents' responses to later questions provided an added dimension to the typologies of rationales illustrated in Tables 2 and 3. Thus, parents used later questions as opportunities to qualify and revise their earlier testimonies, adding layers of complexity to their accounts. It was as though these subsequent reflections served a dual heuristic function; at the same time that they sought to integrate new information, parents were motivated to reprocess and refine their renditions of their decisions to maintain Spanish. Of particular interest were respondents' representations in the coda, the recapitulation and summative portion of the narrative, where the speaker communicates the interpretation that he or she would have the listener give to the series of events just recounted (McCabe & Peterson, 1991). These codas are concentrated in the texts that comprise responses to the final question in our protocol:

> Is there anything that we've forgotten to ask about, or that you've not had a chance to tell us, that you think is important for us to know?

Analyses of the contents of the coda texts indicated that when not explicitly requested to provide rationales for their personal decisions on behalf of Spanish language maintenance, caretakers tended to emphasize their commitment to the Spanish language as an act of affirmation of group identity. "I wanted her to speak Spanish and learn Spanish and know Spanish and be aware of Mexican culture," one parent explained.

Another couple described their choice to maintain Spanish as follows: "It's not so much the language. It was the understanding of values through the language."

This finding, that is, parents' views of language as a social resource in maintaining cultural tradition and ethnic identity, came through at other points in the interviews as well. Most strikingly, when parents detailed the chronology of their children's affinities and disaffinities, and involvements and disinvolvements, with Spanish, they had a tendency to interpret children's language choices as embodying acceptance or rejection of the ethnic identities which the parents had chosen for themselves. Note one parent's undisguised bias as she humorously describes her two teenage children's differing loyalties with regard to cultural affiliation:

> Sometimes [my son] complains that umm there are not enough....Latinos or that there is not enough Latin culture things happening in [Bayview]. Which is agreeable. Uh my daughter for some reason developed a completely different attitude. She was, for example, walking down the street or something and she said, 'Oh there goes a Mexican'. And I was shocked. My son identifies himself as a Latino. Uh she will say, 'Well my father is Jewish and my mother is Spanish'. Meaning, you know, Spanish from Spain. Let's skip over this Latino business. [laughter] I don't really think that she identifies culturally.

Typically, research reports of parent-child interaction in homes where two or more languages are used are based on synchronic observations, that is, observations in a variety of home settings over a relatively short, circumscribed period. Descriptions tend to follow a patterned format delineating the strategy used by each caretaker. Examples are:1) one parent speaks a non-dominant language, one parent speaks the dominant language; 2) both parents speak a non-dominant language; 3) one parent speaks both languages, one parent speaks a non-dominant language. The long-term perspective afforded by the life history accounts, however, revealed, a significant number of shifts

reported in minority language maintenance strategies. (See Table 4 for parents' reported language strategies.)

Table 4
Parents' Reported Home Language Use Patterns

Case	*Parent-to-Child Language*
Case l	
M: Child 1, birth-5	Spanish
M: Child 1, 5-17	Mostly English, some Spanish
Child 2, birth-13	Mostly English, some Spanish
F (in Colombia):	
Child 1	Spanish
Child 2	Spanish
Case 2	
M/F: Child 1, birth-5	Spanish
Child 2, birth-3	Spanish
M/F: Child 1, 5-7	Mostly Spanish, some English
Child 2, 3-5	Mostly Spanish, some English
M/F: Child 1, 7-11	Mostly English, some Spanish
Child 2, 5-9	Mostly English, some Spanish
Child 3, birth-7	Mostly English, some Spanish
Case 3	
M: Child 1	English
F: Child 1	Spanish
Case 4	
M: Child 1, birth-5	Mostly Spanish
Child 1, 6-13	Spanish and English
F (not in home):	
Child 1	Spanish
Case 5	
M: Child 1 birth-2.5	English
M: Child 1, 2.5-5	Spanish and English
Child 2, birth-15 months	Spanish and English
Child 3-6 months	Spanish and English
F: Child 1, 2.5-5	Mostly Spanish, some English
Child 2, birth-15 months	Mostly Spanish, some English
Child 3, 6 months	Mostly Spanish, some English

Case 6	
M/F: Child 1, birth-6	Mostly Spanish, some English
Child 2, birth-4	Mostly Spanish, some English
M/F: Child 1, 7-15	Mostly English, a little Spanish
Child 2, 5-13	Mostly English, a little Spanish
Case 7	
M/F: Child 1, birth-3	Spanish
3-5	English
5-10	Spanish and English
M/F: Child 2	Spanish
Case 8	
M/F: Child 1 (from first marriage, visit infrequently)	English
M: Child 2	English
F: Child 2	Mostly Spanish, some English
Case 9	
M: Child 1, birth-14	Mostly Spanish, a little English
Child 2, birth- 11	Mostly Spanish, a little English
Child 3, birth-2	Mostly Spanish, a little English
F: Child 1, birth-14	Spanish
Child 2, birth-11	Spanish
Child 3, birth-2	Spanish
M/F: Child 1, 14-17	Mostly Spanish, some English
Child 2, 11-14	Mostly Spanish, some English
M: Child 3, 2-4	English
F: Child 3, 2-4	Spanish and English
Case 10	
M: Child 1	Spanish
Child 2	Spanish
F: Child 1, 4-5 (in Nicaragua)	Spanish
Child 1, 5-10	Spanish and English
Child 2	Spanish and English

Seven of the ten families interviewed reported changes in their patterns of language use in the home; over half of these reported two or more such changes. These shifts tended to co-occur with either of the following sets of circumstances: a crucial juncture in the child's formal education (e.g., transition from home to preschool); or a time of flux on the home front, causing changes in enabling or constraining forces (e.g., change of geographic locale occasioned by a move; separation or divorce of parents; arrival of a new sibling). These circumstances, experienced frequently as traumas by both adults and children, would

cause respondents to reevaluate their goals and attitudes with regard to language use in the home.

The complexity of the relationship between language attitudes and situational circumstances is highlighted in Nilda Quintana's (a pseudonym) evocative account of her choices regarding Spanish maintenance for her son. Nilda is a single mother who was raised in a Latino community by parents who made a decision to speak Spanish and, thus, to maintain Mexican cultural values in the home. However, her own decisions regarding her child's language socialization reflect the ebb and flow of her adult life; a life which, as she comes to terms with it in the interview, she has lived in "two worlds." We have edited her story to highlight the junctures at which Nilda chose to turn away from, or enter anew, a commitment to Spanish language maintenance with her son.

Juncture 1: When I left home, I was fifteen. And that's when I got married. I got pregnant, and it seemed inconceivable to me that I would teach my son anything else but Spanish. Because I knew that if he went into the school system, he'd learn English. And I spoke English, so I could always help him out in that way. And I married a Mexican man who only spoke Spanish, and he wanted his son to speak Spanish so when we went to Mexico his son could speak with his father.

Juncture 2: I divorced my ex-husband, and I went to school, and it was too painful to communicate with my son in Spanish. If I said, "M'hijo, todo va a estar bien." [My son, everything will be OK.] I knew that within that world, I had broken with that world when I left my ex-husband. So, I would say in English, you know what, sweetheart, things change. And- I- I thought if I said it in English- he could understand on that level. Because um the traditional pattern is so strong you must not break it.

Juncture 3: And I think it was in the sixth grade where I'd say, "Pedrito," and he seemed not to want to speak Spanish with me, although he continued to speak only Spanish with his father. And that felt insulting and alienating, a way to keep me out of

> his father's world which was really one of my worlds too. So I forced my son, in different ways, to begin to speak the language to me again...Now, he identifies with the core culture. "Soy Mexicano, soy Chicano."

Juncture 4 [In the face of her son's growing autonomy]: However, we've moved away from the community that he belongs to and that I was raised in, where most of the households are Mexican-American, and it's been a very trying year. He decided this year that he didn't want to take Spanish in school, he was gonna take French....it was a great struggle, to belong, to not, who do I belong to, who am I...And I want him to continue to learn Spanish, and to see it as enriching, as the door to his other world.

A final finding yielded by the narrative accounts, related to the one concerning prevalence of shifts in minority language maintenance strategies, concerns the texture of the day-to-day experiences of bilingual families. In the diaspora (in particular in a state which is officially committed to English monolingualism), where Latinos are removed from a natural community of Spanish speakers, constraints on sustaining efforts on behalf of the heritage language are numerous. In such an environment, support for a strategy of maintenance ensues, not from a one-time decision on the part of caretakers regarding family language practice, but rather from a series of choices that constitute affirmations and reaffirmations of a commitment to the minority language. Interestingly, several respondents struggled with their own interpretations of this finding, arriving at the conclusion that identity is not a fixed category, as official characterizations may imply; rather, it is generated by the choice of practices made by individuals in societal and situational contexts characterized by flux (of. Butler, 1990; Gutting, 1994).

Discussion

The exploratory work on which this article is based was undertaken with a view to informing the design of a larger-scale, methodologically

more diverse, age- and geolinguistically-controlled, study that would address the role of early home language experiences in Spanish-English bilingual children's linguistic development, and in their adaptation to schooling. This larger research agenda, in addition to making a theoretical contribution to the understanding of the relationship between family language environment and the development of bilingualism in different sociolinguistic contexts, aims to provide educators and policymakers with the kind of detailed information about the ecology of bilingual homes that can be used to develop and sustain community-home-school collaborative efforts, efforts which, if successful, both complement the agenda of formal schooling and lead to improvement of school outcomes for language minority students (Cummins, 1986; Delgado-Gaitan, 1990; Faltis, 1993).

This pilot study focused on parental attitudes because we noted a lacuna in the extant literature regarding the perspectives of caretakers; how they understand and experience the day-to-day dynamics of minority language maintenance remained largely unelucidated. The findings of the exploratory study show a rich variety of rationales invoked by parents to explain their actions on behalf of Spanish, and indicate a multiplicity of strategies used in the interests of developing children's Spanish language proficiency. However, the manner in which parents describe these rationales and explicate these strategies indicates that they view children's language behaviors in terms other than those that motivate language researchers, policymakers, or teachers. Parents experience the events associated with language use in day-to-day life as enablers of or constraints to, the maturation of their children's identities as social and cultural beings. These envisioned identities, moreover, are not necessarily stable. They tend to be reconfigured as situational circumstances shift and parents struggle to accommodate the continuities and discontinuities that define their lives.

To build successful minority language maintenance programs, schools need to be sensitive to parents' aspirations for their children, and to appreciate that the aspirations impacting language maintenance are shaped by fluid contexts in which parents constantly confront choices. Thus, educators concerned with the linguistic development of bilingual children must do more than inform parents as to how the latter can most beneficially support the school's agenda. We need to include parent

participation in the articulation of this agenda, tapping their experiences and insights as lifelong informants. By so doing, we also help to create supportive frameworks for parents' decisions and actions on behalf of minority language maintenance.

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